

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Jesus said to his disciples, giving them this vivid image, as he told the people about the signs of the end times and his coming on the Last Day. He tells you also to “straighten up and raise your heads” as you go through this world waiting for his coming.

It’s a fascinating thing to ponder what Jesus says in this reading today. Jesus said, “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Take note of the contrast in what Jesus says. There’s a line drawn between those who look for the coming of the Son of Man and those who do not. The difference lies in what or whom they love. To love the Son of Man is to raise your head and greet him with joy. To love the world is to fear the loss of it and see the coming of the Son of Man as a fearful thing. Those are two completely different lives lived in this world before the Last Day.

An early Christian document, the *Didache*, begins by saying, “There are two ways, one of life and one of death; and great is the difference between the two ways.” It draws upon the words of Jesus in Matthew 7 where he compares the narrow gate to the wide gate with the narrow gate being the way that leads to life. This also is like from Deuteronomy 30:15 when God says, “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.” The point here is that everyone is living in this world and heading toward the day when Jesus returns but there are two different ways this is viewed or rather lived.

For those who don’t love God and bask in their sin loving the things of this world more there is great terror. Note those words from Malachi, “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.” The Proper Preface for Advent speaks of this day of wrath when the Lord comes again on the clouds and with his angels. When those who hate God and his word see the Son of Man approaching their heads bow in submission and their knees will bend before him as he judges them. That is a fearful day for those who hate God.

That’s why the unbeliever loves this world so much. He loves the here and now because he and the devil have deceived himself into thinking there is peace in his life when he lives as his own Lord and master. He doesn’t want to face these cold hard realities. He doesn’t want to think about the things of God, he would rather think about other things, more pleasant things. Lives lived this way are lives lived with heads down not looking at horizon with anticipation. All of life is about what’s going on now.

So, what does this life look like that loses sight of the coming Lord and doesn’t wait for it? Well, it can be seen in many ways but chiefly it is in the attitude toward the things of God. There are no prayers said in the homes, no word of God read together, no discussions about how God is confessed in our lives, discussions about what it means to die a Christian death, no looking at this world through the lens of Christ. The unbeliever defines his life by the world and in the world. Not yet is defined by the now rather than the now being defined by the not yet. It’s a deathly serious thing.

Or another aspect is a life of despair where there is no future hope. The here and now is meaningless and really an existence in nothing with no point in life so you either resign yourself to the despair or you just eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you die. This also is living with your head down and not looking for your redemption drawing near.

Jesus uses a parable today to illustrate this point. “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place,

you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

Jesus tells you these signs, which have been going on since his ascension and will continue until he comes again, point us to see the Lord as coming. Your minds are to be set to “Advent” time as you look at the world around you. The Christian sees the things of this world and his life in this way. He knows, “the best is yet to come” as he goes through life and thinks about the state of things.

The Lord warns you, though. Jesus tells you there is danger of something in this life. It’s fear of something other than God. He goes onto to say, “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” When you view things as a Christian don’t be like those whom Jesus describes here. Jesus is warning you against a life lived with weighed down hearts and in a “hungover drunken stupor” as it could be translated from the Greek text. The unbeliever’s life is lived that way as he goes through this world even if he doesn’t realize it. The events in the world and in everyday lives of unbelievers are lives of fear. There are unrest and anxiety about wars, diseases, political upheaval, and all these things. When your world is under attack and everything you know, and love is being upended there is a great fear. Your love and trust are being destroyed.

False gods are exposed when you look at your life and ask yourself, “what am I worried about? What am I afraid of or what weighs my heart down? What do I care about in this life to the point that instead of lifting my head toward the coming Christ I lower it and look to other things?” The devil, the world, and your sinful flesh are trying to lower your head and weigh you down. How are you marking time now and viewing your future? “Well just a short while and this year will be over. Just a little while and repairs will be made. Just a little while longer and I can focus. Just a bit more time and things will calm down.” While there may be legitimate concerns in all those sentiments, what’s the danger there? What is the temptation in how to view your life? What is defining how you live in reference to the things around you? They are trying to take your eyes of Jesus and onto the things of this world. God warns you now, this very day, “stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

As Christians you are formed and lived by God’s word. Listen to Jesus as he said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” In all that is uncertain and everything that surrounds you, there is something that doesn’t change and will last forever, God’s word. It’s no wonder, that God makes this statement numerous times throughout the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. That goes along with that very fact of his eternal word. Throughout history people have lost sight of what is eternal and what is lasting. They see the signs around them and rather than straighten up their heads they start looking around and get caught up in what’s happening around them.

Dear Christians, God gives you rest. He gives you peace because just as his word remains forever, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The promises of God that he has redeemed you by the blood of Christ and no one can snatch you from his Father’s hand have been true, still are true, and will always be true. Jesus said in John 11, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” That’s what you have in Jesus. It’s been given to you in your baptism as Titus 3 says, “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Your sin is forgiven, and you will be Jesus and all his saints forever.

2nd Sunday in Advent—Populus Zion—December 7, 2025

As Christians, your lives are lived in this “Advent” faith. Some of the last words in the entire Bible direct our gaze and are words of great comfort. In Revelation 22, St. John writes, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” He wrote this while in exile and Christians were being persecuted and killed. The response of St. John, which is the response Jesus teaches us today is those words, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” You pray a similar thing in the Lord’s Prayer, “thy Kingdom come.” You are confessing that “God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.” The hearts of Christians, your hearts, know that the day is coming, whenever that may be, when the Son of Man will come in great glory.

When you see the events of this world and all that is sin, death, and the crafts and assaults of the devil you lament them and look to where redemption and deliverance is found. The Epistle reading says beautifully, “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus is coming, he says through the Scriptures, be encouraged and hope in him and for that day.

The eyes by which you view the world around you are the eyes of faith which is to say you see these things and you know and have God’s word which points you to the glory to come. You have Christ in all this life, who has saved you from sin, death, and the devil. You know your redemption is drawing near because your salvation has been accomplished. You can and do lift your heads with confidence because you belong to Christ, you are baptized into him, and your sin is forgiven. You straighten and look forward for that day to come even as you proclaim his death by eating and drinking his body and blood in the Lord’s Supper.

Be encouraged and have hope for Jesus is coming. “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your salvation comes.’ The Lord will cause his majestic voice to be heard, you shall have gladness of heart.” That’s you the antiphon of the Introit is talking about. You are the daughter of Zion. You are God’s people, the church so “Behold, your salvation comes” God says to you people of Zion. Rejoice and be glad in your hearts for your Lord comes for you.

Your redemption is drawing near as the Son of Man comes in glory. It’s your redemption that comes. To be redeemed is to be bought with the price of Jesus’s blood and it’s to be brought into something. You are freed from sin, death, and the devil and into God’s kingdom and everlasting life. That’s yours and Jesus comes for you. You are free to live in this world because you will live in the new heaven and earth forever. The things around you don’t sway you or weigh you down because you know that your redemption is drawing near. The antiphon of the Introit beautifully puts it, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your salvation comes.’ The Lord will cause his majestic voice to be heard, and you shall have gladness of heart.” That’s you, dear Populus Zion, people of God. That’s your salvation who comes. See him, Christ crucified for you and risen for you and have a glad heart.

What a joy today to have this sure and certain hope which does not change. Cling to these promises God preaches to you today and feast at his Supper as you proclaim his death until he comes. Rejoice in this Advent Lord, your Redemption, who has done all things well for you and is with you even now. See the things around you and lift up your heads and hearts to greet the Son of Man who comes in glory. Gather as the people of God in this same joy and hope as his holy people. Hear the word of God in this place and sing hymns that teach you this and fix your eyes on Jesus. Read the word of God daily in your homes. Pray without ceasing. Feast at his Supper. Look together and see what awaits, your salvation comes. “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.